

"To Greet Yourself At Your Own Door"

Reading and sermon preached by Reverend Carolyn Patierno
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"Love After Love" By, Derek Walcott

The time will come
When, with elation,
You will greet yourself arriving
At your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's
welcome,

And say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who
was yourself.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you

All your life, whom you ignored
For another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the
Bookshelf,

The photographs, the desperate notes,
Peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

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In the 13th century the Persian poet, Rumi said: "It may be that the satisfaction I need depends on my going away, so that when I've gone and come back, I'll find it at home." – *Rumi*

Which is essentially the ancient equivalent to "tap your heels three times and repeat: there's no place like home; there's no place like home; there's no place like home."

Home. We could come at this month's ministry theme from a thousand different directions just as we often search in a thousand different

directions for home all the while as strangers to ourselves.

To be clear, I'm not talking about literally leaving home when leaving home is a healthy, heart & mind-integrated choice. After all, you can leave home – you can *leave yourself* - even while living in the same house where you AND your grandmother AND your mother were all raised up.

This sermon about Home is not geographic in nature.

It is said: "Home is where you hang your heart."

For the person who lives mindfully – who lives woke, aware, heart and mind in relationship and at peace with each other – it matters less WHERE their heart is hung. Home is not *where* you live. Home is *how* you live.

Home is you standing on a firm foundation and at peace, door open wide. Home is where you "greet yourself arriving at your own door."

We lose track of ourselves in a thousand different ways and for a thousand different reasons. I'll hold up only one of those reasons. I've been reading and thinking about the effect that new technologies have on our lives ... on our brains, actually. Like me, you likely have had a hunch about diminishing attention spans and heightened anxiety and as it turns out, it would behoove us to pay attention to the hunch and adjust accordingly. That's a reflection for another day but suffice to say, it gives one pause. For now let's consider only this: checking. Checking is the sense of urgency that simmers and says: "Check".

Check email.

Check: voicemail, texts, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.

Take stock, Friends. Has "checking" become less about checking in and more about checking out? I will confess, that with a creeping horror, I began to realize that I was checking email and Facebook *before turning off the light to go to sleep at night*. I thought I needed to – I WANTED to - check. That was me losing track of myself because checking email, checking Facebook – "CHECKING", period – has no place in a sleep routine.

I was taking leave of myself. And you've done it, too. We lose track of ourselves in a thousand different ways.

God knows it's not Kansas we are fleeing. We are fleeing our own stuff whether it be the winter of our discontent, or our addictions, or a broken heart or monotony or mental illness or our past and ancient mistakes. We don't need to get on the bus or in a car. We walk the long, winding road; we cross the poppy field and stand at the sparkling city's threshold. We have arrived!

But once there you unpack your bag and to your horror there in the corner in the little, secret pouch is ... guess what? Your winter of discontent, your broken heart, monotony, mental illness, your past and ancient mistakes ... that you will not forgive. How in the world did all that stuff fit in there with all your hopes and dreams? As it turns out, all your baggage fits rather nicely right inside your heart and mind and it is your most true self that is edged out.

But ...

The time will come
When, with elation,
You will greet yourself arriving
At your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's
welcome,

"The time will come"

What finally moves us to open the door to welcome our true selves? Often, it is a dramatic turn in our lives: you or your beloved is handed the scary diagnosis; your relationship / your marriage ends; you are laid off from your job; you retire; your children grow up and fly away; someone you love dies; you accept and say out loud, "I am an addict." The silver lining is that these life experiences arrive with an expanse of quiet. The door to ourselves opens and we are given the chance welcome home our true selves - with elation. We get to do the work.

And ... there is another option, Friends, one that requires the same kind of hard work and mindfulness. I give voice to what you know when I say that we need not wait for the dramatic turn in our lives to welcome ourselves home and then to keep that self at home and comfortable. You can rest assured that it is wholly possible that "You will love again the stranger who / was yourself."

Your first encounter with that familiar stranger will be as tender as the poet describes:

Come in.

Have a seat.

Give wine. Give bread.

Give your heart.

For that stranger who has loved you has been waiting for you the way a parent waits at home the first 17 year-old takes their first solo drive in the car.

"Please come home to me safely." Is the whispered prayer. We whisper the same prayer as we yearn to welcome ourselves home.

Begin here:

Be kind to yourself as you would to an honored guest.
Remember the things you used to love.

Remember when you danced?

Remember when you'd pack your poles and head for the water?

Remember you used to read mysteries just for fun?

Remember when you'd take a night walk?

Remember when you tried your hand at poetry?

Remember when you wrote long letters to your friends?

Remember when you had the patience of a saint?

Remember the hope you harbored?

Remember when you loved the world with abandon?

What do you need to bring you back? Hear this encouragement: you

don't need much. You need to quiet your mind. You with young children. You with the big job. You with a half dozen volunteer commitments. None of you need to wait until life slaps you upside your head. You can begin right here. You can begin with a deep breath that is spirit. That is life.

Sit. Feast on your life. Amen.